

## THE ALBATROSS OF LAYSAN.

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Hundreds of miles from the regular course of mail steamers, on a tiny sand-grit island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, millions of birds have made their homes; here for countless generations they have lived, finding abundant food and suitable places in which to rear their young.

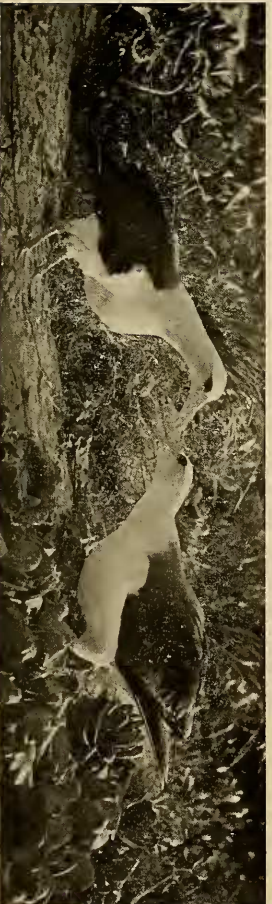
This primitive world, inhabited only by birds, is known as Laysan Island and is one of the Hawaiian group. The island has an area of two square miles, is low and flat, and although of volcanic origin has its upper surface to-day completely covered with coral sand and phosphate rock. The shores are of cream-white sand; the higher ground bordering the beach is covered with a rich growth of low bushes and sand grasses, among which are trailing vines. In the center lies a shallow lagoon unconnected with the sea, not far from the south end of which is a small fresh-water pond. From the central plane the sloping sides of the old coral atoll basin can be seen raising gently on all sides to the higher ground that borders the beach.

In the spring of 1911, I spent six weeks on this island with three assistants to collect the necessary material and data for making a cycloramic reproduction of the bird rookeries for the Museum of the State University of Iowa; and while there noted twenty-three species of birds, among the most notable being the Laysan albatross (*Diomedea immutabilis*, Rothschild).

The birds did not seem to mind the presence of man. As our party toiled up the beach through the loose coral sand, these beautiful creatures were seen on the higher ground, assembled in groups of twenty or more; as we drew nearer they came up to greet us, some of them bowing profoundly.

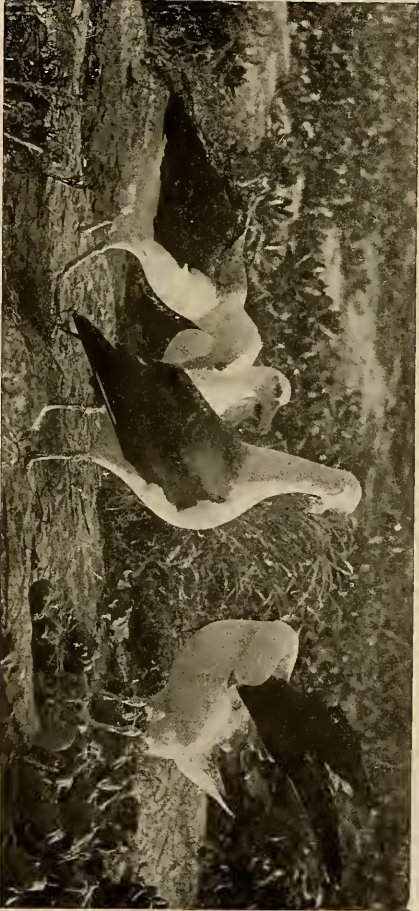


They walk about each other, stepping high like negro cake-walkers and bowing all the time.



They cross bills rapidly several times. The first stage in the strange "dance" of the Laysan albatross.





Second stage in "dance"—One bird quickly turns its head while lifting one wing; the other bird in the meantime snaps its bill.